

THE LABOR FORCE IN AGRICULTURE IN ROMANIA, A CURRENT CHALLENGE

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

In the last 15 years, the European Union has lost 30% of its agricultural workforce, and the trend is worrying. To stop this phenomenon, appropriate policies are needed at the European level. Climate change, technological progress and labor mobility have profoundly transformed the field of agriculture. Agricultural machinery is becoming more and more efficient, and computers are increasingly important in agricultural processing technologies, but physical labor in agriculture is not going away anytime soon. In recent years, farmers in the European Union have faced a labor shortage, partially offset by a migration of workers from Eastern European states. At the level of the European Union, the deficit cannot be compensated because the labor force in agriculture registers a decline, from year to year. The agricultural sector in Romania faces an acute labor shortage, and farmers must make efforts to become attractive and efficient. Young people who go to work abroad do not return to work in agriculture. The present paper is an analyze of the situation regarding the labor force in Romania, nowadays.

Keywords: workforce, agriculture, economy, agricultural policy

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INTRODUCTION

There are many angles of view of the workforce structure; thus, the structure of the labor force can be viewed through the lens of participation in economic activity or employment, through that of economic branches and sectors, occupations, etc. Many times, the criteria according to which the workforce is structured are combined. The labor market, in the broad sense, includes problems related to employment, unemployment and the quality of work, productivity, earnings and the cost of work (Ciulinariu, 2019). The employed population represents the main component of the labor force or the active population, the other component being represented by the unemployed.

The labor market is the one that has the right essential purpose allocating jobs to different fields, categories, branches and sub-branches, having as ultimate goal of fulfilling or facilitating both demand and supply specific needs. This purpose is constantly present on the labor market, without there can be no fluctuation and diversification of supply and

demand (Masot, 2021). Another purpose of the labor market it is also to provide information constantly regarding the demand and supply of work, regarding to the way in which the salary evolves or involves employees, the conditions that must be met by both the employer and the employee on the labor market, etc. Exposure of those who are part of the labor market to this information is extremely important because this market must represent the neutral "ground" and transparent for all entities involved in labor market specific processes (Vasile, 2019).

A third purpose of the labor market is to educate both the demand side and the supply side towards one certain behavior necessary for mode development in which they communicate and why not, and how they cope (Ghangshyam, 2015). The labor market encourages through this purpose a climate of social protection and confidence of future young people employed in what they assume related market systems.

Two major aspects are currently grinding Romanian agriculture from the perspective of human capital: the first is the aging of the population, and the second, the lack of qualifications. Almost 60% of the labor force involved in agriculture is represented by people over 60 years old, only 74 thousand of the

almost one million workers in agriculture between 30 and 40 years old. There are multiple programs both to stimulate young people moving to the countryside and to qualify resources, but the procedures are cumbersome and the results are visible only in the long term. On the other hand, in agriculture employers are looking for people who are really qualified, not just passed through various superficial courses. Difficulties in finding competent human resources exist not only for primary qualifications, but also at the level of higher education graduates. Even if the number of Agronomy graduates is high, many of them choose other fields of activity. On the other hand, the training provided within the formal university education system is not harmonized with the practices of modern agriculture, the graduates do not have the experience desired by employers, and the specializations are not correlated with the current market requirements. For employers in agriculture, there are three levels of qualifications, which must be approached differently, basic personnel (agricultural worker/fish farmer, vegetable grower, animal breeder, tractor driver, agricultural mechanic, etc.) can be qualified at the workplace or following short courses (2-4 months); migration is high, also seasonality, and without these qualifications the activity cannot evolve; personnel with higher training (agronomist engineer), for whom there are agencies specialized in employment in agriculture, which can provide the right candidates. However, the availability is low, and a solution can be the identification of Agronomy students who live in the employer's region and who can be motivated to return home for a guaranteed job; for the level of agricultural management, it is preferable to find experienced people, who should be provided with relocation or commuting facilities depending on the situation. The training cycle of such a person is long, and there is not always the necessary time. In all cases, government or local programs run through various financing lines or through the representatives of the National Employment and Vocational Training Agency must also be checked. In agriculture, human resources are limited, which still does not prevent the development of the field. However, attracting qualified people can have a major effect on improving the quality of the activity, productivity and implicitly, profitability (Gupta, 2014).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The key research methods employed were analysis and synthesis, analogy, and graphics to resemble the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Currently, the Romanian economy is facing serious problems in the field of labor force utilization in agriculture, with a series of distortions on the labor market, which translate into the coexistence of a labor force deficit, in certain economic branches, with poor utilization of it as a whole. The employment rate at the national level is still low, and unemployment is significant, although its rate is lower than the European average. That is why the programs/measures in the field of labor in Romania must focus on attracting and maintaining more people in work, by making contractual provisions more flexible, and developing the educational and professional training system. In recent years, however, a labor force deficit has appeared in Romania, affecting development and the economic growth of some sectors: it is about construction, services, new industry and agriculture, but also education, health and public administration. The system of social assistance in Romania, promoted with generosity, generated the situation of not being able to find people for employment. In this way, the labor force crisis in Romania is acutely felt in agriculture as well. Unlike other sectors of the economy, the agricultural workforce has a high level of aging and a low level of professional training.

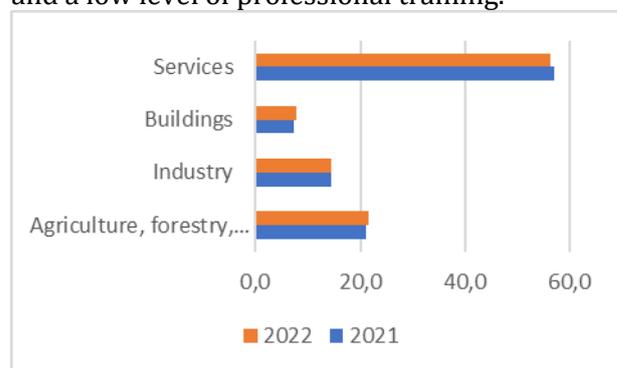


Figure. 1. Distribution of employed population by economic activities, years 2021-2022

From the distribution of employed persons by economic activity, it follows that 181.2 thousand persons or 21.5% of the total number of employed persons were active in the agricultural sector, their number increasing by

3.0% compared to the level of the previous year (in 2021 - 175, 9 thousand and 21.1%), as shown in the figure below. From the data obtained for the years 2021-2022, there are no large discrepancies between the number of women and men working in agriculture. Significant differences are registered between the urban and rural environments, the inhabitants of the rural environment being significantly more involved in agricultural activities. The available active population consists of people who declare in the census that they exercise a professional activity or who, without working, declare that they are looking for a job. The available active population constitutes the workforce resources, the potential workforce. The volume of the active population is influenced by a whole series of structural and conjunctural factors. Among the structural factors we mention: the duration of schooling, the retirement age, the degree of use of the female labor force. Conjunctural factors are represented by the participation in the economic activity of young people, the elderly and women.

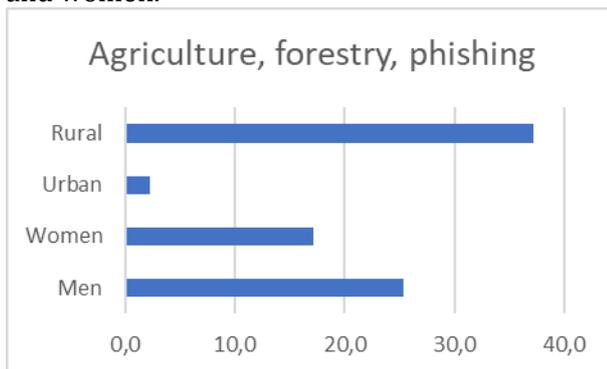


Figure. 2. Distribution of the employed population in agriculture, forestry, phishing by gender and medium, 2022

In the graphic below, it is resembled the fact that the highest employment percentage involved in agriculture is registered in the North-East region, with 20.25% and the lowest percentage is registered in Bucharest-Ilfov region. 1.51. An important aspect in this case is the geographical position.

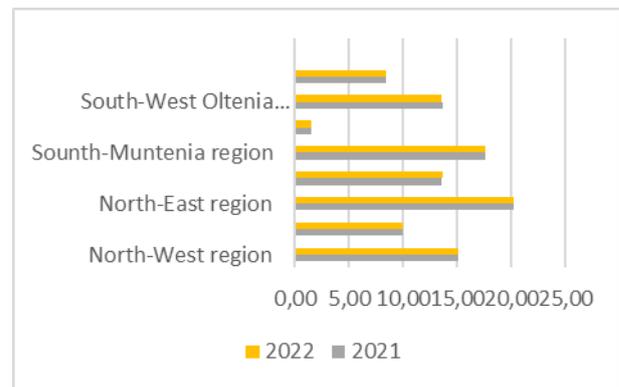


Figure. 3. The share of Romania's employment in agriculture by development regions, 2021-2022 (%)

Work in agriculture represents the determining element for the value of the resources in this branch, represented by the land capital and the exploitation capital, decisively influencing the production results.

Many agrarian economists recognize the economic importance of work in agriculture through the lens of the large weight in the structure of the production expenses of those related to the labor force. This weight is estimated between 30-60% of the total expenses, depending on the type of exploitation, the intensive or extensive production systems that are practiced. Although agriculture, with 20% of GDP and 35% of the employed population, it is the second largest sector in the Romanian economy, the real performances of this branch are far from the pedoclimatic potential of the country, far from the agricultural vocation of our nation. Labor productivity remains very low in the agricultural sector and the food industry, although the share of the private sector in agricultural production was 86% in 2022. The development of the private sector in agriculture (and agriculture in general) is hindered by the low degree of capitalization of agricultural holdings (of peasant households), the low degree of mechanization, the lack of support services (technical, financial, managerial) but also the professional knowledge of the Romanian peasant.

CONCLUSIONS

Agriculture is the main economic activity in most rural areas in Romania. However, many farmers practice additional activities, such as processing of agricultural products. The diversification of the rural economy is a source of vitality that Romania should also support encourage it through its rural development programs. Without agriculture, there would be few elements that to maintain the vitality and unity of many communities rural. If agriculture were to disappear, in many areas the land would be abandoned. Farmers play a very important economic role in rural areas, which the EU cannot afford to lose. It is necessary a common agricultural policy to support young people to start in agriculture, giving them funds to buy land, machinery and agricultural equipment. This provides, also grants for training young people farmers, as well as those with experience, in view using the latest production methods and techniques. Encouraging young farmers and ensuring continuity from one generation to another it

should be true challenge for rural development in Romania. In some regions of the country, the practice of agriculture is particularly difficult – for example, in hilly areas and mountainous and remote regions. It is important to the vitality of these communities is maintained regions. A common agricultural policy provides funds to ensure that these communities, located in vulnerable rural regions, have a good economic situation and do not gradually disappear.

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